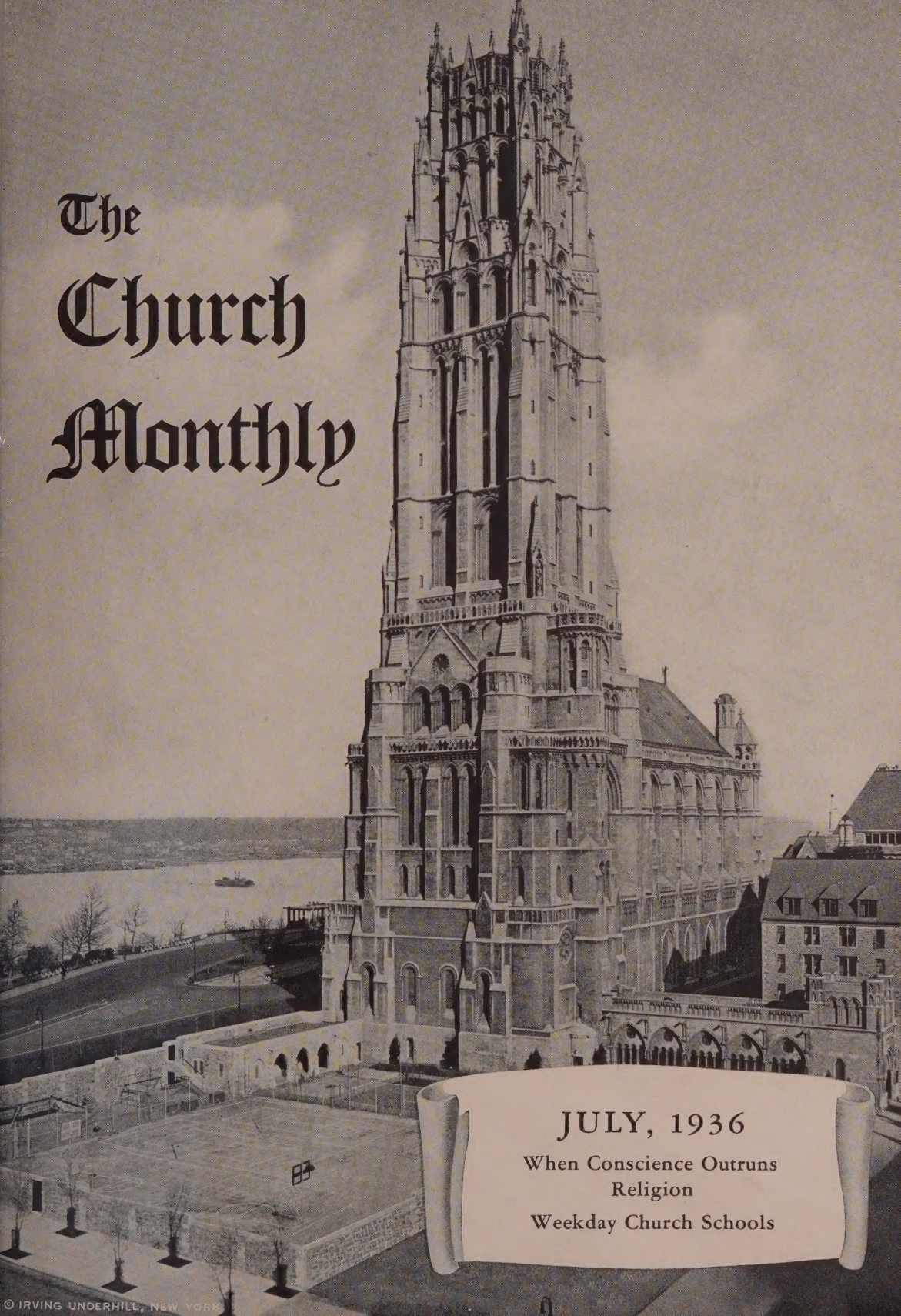
The Church Monthly



JULY, 1936

When Conscience Outruns Religion

Weekday Church Schools

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The Church Monthly

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TEACHERS

The center panel of this detail of the chancel screen is dedicated to the teaching profession. Standing here with the Christ in his character as The Great Teacher are the statues of Thomas Aquinas, Henry Drummond, Thomas Arnold, Socrates, Erasmus, Pestalozzi.

When Conscience Outruns Religion

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

One of the most disastrous evils that can befall religion is to have the best moral conscience of its generation get ahead of it. When the effective goodness of one's time moves on before while religion ethically lags behind, religion is obviously in a bad way. The assumption of conventional preachers is that men ought to become religious in order to become morally better. The realistic fact, however, is that often the most important and far-reaching ethical insights and endeavors of a generation are pioneering on ahead while organized religion is behind, stuck in the mud or reluctantly dragging its feet.

We are familiar with the fact that again and again religion has let the intelligence of its generation get ahead of it. Organized religion, refusing to believe the insights of the scientific seers from Copernicus to Darwin and so facing the new science with ecclesiastical opposition—that is a familiar and often deplored fact. But, after all, that is not so strange, because science is not religion's specialty and in opposing new science at its first appearance religion has only done what the older scientists themselves have often done. So, when Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood, it is said that no scientist of that day over forty years of age believed it. It is not strange that religion should often have let the pioneering intelligence of its time get ahead of it. But morals, the principles and practises of the good life, are of the very stuff of religion and when they move ahead and religion lags behind, a situation arises to cause religious people deep, not to say desperate, concern.

Now, when one thinks of any faith not his own, whether historic or contemporary, one can plainly see this phenomenon. In many an ancient faith, human sacrifice was a religious ritual to which religion clung with stubborn fidelity long after the best conscience of the people had overpassed it, and to this day in India the caste system, one of the cruelest of human institutions, against whose extremes men like Gandhi are making vigorous protest, has its support and will have its long lingering defense in orthodox Hinduism. When one thinks of religious faiths, historic or contemporary, other than one's own, one can plainly see the basis for the judgment of one of our foremost students of society, that "the religious manual of conduct almost always lags behind the current moral standards of a people." The question with us today is whether we have enough clarity of vision and objectivity of thought to see that same situation in our contemporary American Christianity.

It is not difficult to understand why thus religion is continually tempted to let the best moral conscience of its time go ahead of it. For one thing, religion has the inveterate habit of making everything it touches sacred. It is easy to pass from bicycles to automobiles or even to airplanes because, religion having nothing to do with them, bicycles do not become sacred. But it is far more difficult to pass from one religious creed or ritual or

ethical idea to another, because religion always adds the powerfully preservative feeling of sacredness. When, therefore, religion becomes entangled with a moral or social custom, like slavery, and especially when it can find in its ancient books slavery accepted or approved, there a powerful bulwark is erected against attacks upon the system. So as late as 1864 a lengthy and fervent defense of slavery was written in our own country by a bishop. Moreover, that bishop did not say merely that slavery was permissible; he said it was a sacred institution ordained of God, although already the best conscience of the nation, north and south, had gone beyond it.

For still another reason religion is in danger of letting the best moral conscience of its time outrun it. One of the major functions of religion is to bestow interior security and steadiness upon individual souls. Perhaps the most mysterious fact about our bodies is that in health they maintain a steady temperature of about 98.6°, no matter what the weather is outside, from Greenland to the Equator. But man's spirit has no such automatic guardianship against the heats and colds of this feverish and troubled world, and religion endeavors to supply the need. Now the need is deep and religion's service in giving men what the saints have called "the peace of God, which passeth all understanding" is real and enduring. But if a religion absorb itself merely in endeavoring to keep a steady temperature in individual souls, it can easily become the friend of the established status quo and the enemy of all disturbing change. So while the real pioneers of goodness in a generation are forging on ahead, often with tormented hearts and lives linking themselves with the disinherited and fighting for a more decent social order, saying, it may be, as they go to prison for it, what Eugene Debs said, "While there is a lower class, I am in it; while there is a criminal element, I am of it; while there is a soul in prison, I am not free," the church may be lagging far behind the lines, absorbed in trying to keep the spiritual temperature of a few individuals at 98.6°.

When, then, a candid mind not only finds in other faiths the universal danger of conscience outrunning religion but sees as well the inherent and ever present reasons for that, it is hard for him to think that his own Christianity escapes the peril. So today I plead with you for a religion that will not let the best conscience of our time get ahead of it.

We may begin with a familiar and comparatively simple illustration. One of the most admirable factors in the goodness of today is the scientific conscience about truth. Science is not simply intellectual or inventive. It is a moral matter, a disinterested care about facts, a devotion to the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. There is in science at its best a certain rigorous honesty about facts and the statements one makes concerning them that constitutes one of the noblest elements in the morals of today whereas in general organized Christianity is far behind science in that regard. That hurts. One can understand and excuse the churches for sometimes failing to see the pioneering insights of highly specialized investigators but to have the religion of one's time less honest than its best conscience is deplorable.

Can you imagine groups of scientists standing up to make formal confession of their faith in solemn words begin-

ning, "I believe," when they do not believe? It is unthinkable. The scientific conscience would not tolerate that. Ponder these words of Thomas Huxley: "The longer I live, the more obvious it is to me that the most sacred act of a man's life is to say and to feel, 'I believe such and such to be true.'" That is from a scientist—"The most sacred act of a man's life is to say . . . 'I believe.'" Yet every week in many of our churches Christians repeat historic formulations of faith beginning solemnly with "I believe," when in multitudes of cases they do not believe. The ministers themselves, dragooned by ecclesiastical necessity, who lead the recitation, do not believe and say so. They solemnly affirm that they believe in the virgin birth and they do not believe. They solemnly affirm that they believe in the resurrection of the body and they do not believe. As one clergyman in this city put it to me, "I get around that; I make the choir chant the creed." I know all the arguments in defense of such practises in the churches and I would not for a moment charge any devoted man with conscious, personal dishonesty, but still I say that the best conscience of our time about what honesty means has gotten a long way ahead of *that*.

Moreover, this kind of practise in the church does irreparable harm. Young men and women trained in our universities, catching something of the scrupulousness of science about facts and statements concerning them, see this loose and to them apparently unscrupulous affirmation in the church and have one more excuse for surrendering religion. They think that even in the matter of sheer honesty the best conscience of our time has outrun the church.

Let us turn now to a larger field for the illustration of our truth. The best conscience of our time is profoundly disturbed about the inequalities in our social order. The statistics concerning this, according to the Brookings reports, for example, are plain enough but in a city like this one needs no statistics to make the matter clear.

Last Sunday, for example, I spoke to you here about the enduring experiences that can begin in childhood and go through with one to the very grave—the love of nature, the companionship of books, the love of music, the profound interior satisfactions of an unashamed conscience, and an enriched spiritual life—and I said that they were the most democratic and accessible experiences we know, costing the least in money and most openly available to all the people. Then I went home and thought about it. I think that what I said is true, that such experiences as the love of nature, of books, of music, of an enriched spiritual life, are the most accessible we know and lend themselves least to the privilege and monopoly of the few. But what a devastating corollary comes from that! Imagine yourself living under the conditions that millions of people face in New York today, impoverished, trying to bring up children in old-law tenements that in all good conscience should have been torn down half a century ago, facing environments fairly represented in a play like "Dead End," and tell me frankly how much you would be interested in these abiding and most accessible experiences, how much margin of spiritual resilience and energy you would have to care for them, and what chance you think your children would have to be the kind of persons to whom such experiences would matter.

So, with a disturbed conscience I saw that I had been talking about the most available experiences in human life to you who could understand and have them, while all around were multitudes of people who could barely understand them and could do little about them in any case. Surely, the best social conscience of our time must be disturbed, as it is disturbed, about the appalling inequalities of our social order.

Now, for the most part the churches are associated with the privileged. Where in this congregation are the slum dwellers who tonight will sleep in the 250,000 bedrooms in this city that no sunlight ever enters? They are not here. Would they not be welcome? Most welcome, but they are not here. Where are the day laborers, the toilers with their hands, the thousands of men, for example, who every morning in this city deliver milk at our doors? They are not here. Would they not be welcome? Most welcome, but they are not here. So across this country our churches for the most part are allied with, supported by, directed to the needs and attitudes of the comparatively-privileged, and the consequent temptation to us all, ministers and laymen alike, is obvious.

For out there the disinherited, the underprivileged, the hard-hit, the restless, dreaming of a better day for their children, whom they love as much as we love ours, are trying to do something about it. Oh, I know, they are often trying crazy things like the Townsend Plan or Father Coughlin's panaceas, yet planning, hoping for a better day for all the people, and in the best and most intelligent areas, mark it, getting out ahead—the best social conscience of our time set on such a reformation of the social order as will make impossible the continuance or recurrence of our present inequities. So, once more, organized religion is in danger of letting the best social conscience of its time get ahead.

Therefore let me address myself to you as I address myself to my own conscience. The privileged are not merely a few of the conspicuously well-to-do. We are all in this situation together, practically everybody in this church today. And if we are Christians in the serious sense that we want the spirit of Jesus operative in the world, when it comes to building a social order with open doors of decent opportunity before all people, we ought to be out in front. The worst disservice that we as individuals or churches can do to Christianity is to become the sponsors and supporters of the status quo. The Russian church did that, allied itself with the status quo while an unhappy people under the Czar were trying to feel their way forward to a better day. This is the tragedy of the Russian church, that in the day of its power it allied itself with privilege and let the best conscience of its time get ahead of it and, lo! the nemesis of that fatality has been overwhelming and conclusive. How often has religion gone down, chained to a status quo it allied itself with! Could that not happen to our own privileged Protestantism?

Of course, in all this I am thinking not simply of Christianity but of democracy. I care about that too. And democracy came out of, depends on, and is indissolubly connected with a certain comparative equality of condition. It was said of New Haven a century ago that "no man was too poor to own a carriage, and no man was rich enough to own two." Read Daniel

Webster if you want some of the sturdiest statements ever made about the indissoluble connection between equality and democracy. "A great equality of condition," as Daniel Webster said, is "the true basis, most certainly, of a popular government." What we are saying now is not new radicalism but old Americanism. Today democracy faces one of the most critical eras of its history. On the one side are fascism and communism, although ultimately there is more hope in the latter than in the former, and on the other side democracy. For one, I am all for democracy, but the basis of democracy is not mainly political; it is economic. We cannot go on in this country with successful democracy in the face of the embittering inequality that exists today, so that, in spite of all the natural and inevitable differences of opinion about ways and means that must exist in such a congregation as this, there ought to be no difference of opinion about the necessity of profound social change. Let no man here who cares for Christianity or democracy, for any private privilege or any reactionary fear become the sponsor and supporter of this status quo while the best conscience of our time goes on ahead.

Having thus illustrated our truth in two diverse realms, let us turn the kaleidoscope a little and see our proposition in a new relationship. There is a kind of religion which, far from being left behind by morals, has been the pioneer of morals—prophetic religion. When in the Scripture Isaiah, the prophet of God, said to his people, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek justice, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow," there was religion, you see, far out ahead, calling to the morals of the people to come after it. So always ecclesiastical religion gets outrun by conscience but prophetic religion, represented in the Old Testament by men like Amos, Micah, Isaiah, and Jeremiah, and in the New Testament by Jesus himself, has been a trail-blazer for morals. Positively, then, today we are pleading for prophetic religion, and these, I think, are two of its typical attributes.

First, again and again in history, far ahead of the moral conscience of the people, prophetic religion has seized on a great and revolutionary truth, and then that truth, like a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night, has gone ahead and morals have come stumbling after.

One such vanguard truth was the idea that all men are equal before God, who is no respecter of persons. That is a religious insight, the first entrance into human thinking of the idea of equality. In spite of all the rankings and discriminations that seem important on earth, when men and women stand before the face of Eternal God they stand alike. When that idea of equality emerged in religion there was no equality elsewhere, no equality before the law, no equality of the sexes, slavery taken for granted, tyranny taken for granted. In only one place had that concept arisen: where men face Eternal God the differences vanish and they are alike. Well, as every student of the history of thought knows, that has turned out to be one of the most revolutionary ideas in man's record, because if men verily believe that they stand alike before God, then they cannot help seeing that something is the matter with slavery, with tyranny, with the

subjection of women, with crushing poverty. So prophetic religion with a great truth went ahead and morals are still trying to trail after.

Another such vanguard idea is the belief in the essential dignity and infinite value of every human soul. That is a religious insight. It rose high in Plato and in Jesus higher yet. When that idea arrived in religion, the human soul was not practically treated as though it was of infinite value. That was a pioneer concept in religion and, as Professor Whitehead of Harvard has made clear, no one can understand the rising conscience of the Western world across the centuries against slavery, against tyranny, against illiteracy, against the mistreatment of children, of women, of the sick, of the insane, against industrial despotism and crushing poverty, without taking into account this creative influence of a religious idea which made men see that, if every soul is infinitely sacred, then something is intolerably the matter with our societies. So once more prophetic religion went ahead and morals came after.

So we could go on showing that, while ecclesiastical religion is continually left behind, prophetic religion has been a trail-blazer for goodness. That is why we never catch up with Jesus. In physical presence he is back in history; in creative ideas he is out ahead, with his religious insight challenging our morals, condemning them, inspiring them.

Put it this way. There are two kinds of causation in the world, one forcing us from behind, the other drawing us from before. When we eat food we are forced to it by hunger but when we paint a picture or write a symphony or build a cathedral we are drawn from ahead by something that we would like to translate out of the ideal world unseen into the world visible and tangible. Every man's life has these two forms of causation, one pushing him from behind, the other drawing him from before. The more a man is pushed from behind the less of a man he is; the more a man is drawn from before, the more of a man he is. And of all influences that have gone ahead and drawn morals after them nothing so much as prophetic religion has been the pathfinder and pioneer that human goodness has stumbled after.

The second attribute of prophetic religion, briefly put, is a certain clairvoyant prevision of practical possibilities and an undiscourageable faith in their achievement. At the beginning of this sermon I know well that I was encouraging some doubters here in their distaste for religion and confirming some of their worst suspicions about it, that it lags behind while conscience goes ahead. Listen to this then: "They shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more." Is that a resolution of a modern peace society? On the contrary, that is the prophecy of a man of God in the eighth century before Christ. Did the world then look as though peace were possible? On the contrary, despite all our discouragements, the practical chances of peace now are a thousand to one compared with Isaiah's time. Was ecclesiastical religion then in sympathy with such pacific aims? On the contrary, ecclesiastical religion, then as generally, was just as nationalistic and militaristic as the common run of morals. Prophetic religion in the eighth century before Christ—as from the heights of Zion looking eastward one sees the first

edges of the dawn come up from the desert far across the Jordan gorge—saw the far-off premonitions of peace. Well, that certainly is not religion lagging behind morals.

A generation ago some of us were deeply upset because the intelligence of our time was getting ahead of its Christianity. To see the best thinking of our time forging ahead into a new scientific world-view while religion lagged behind was intolerable and we bestirred ourselves. Whatever else happened, we said, we would have a religion that kept up with the best thinking of our time. Today another problem challenges us. Our danger is that the best conscience of our time should get ahead of us.

Wherever else Christ is, he is out ahead there. For peace against war, for a world community against our suicidal nationalism, for human brotherhood against the rising tide of racial prejudice, for freedom against fascism, for human equality against our prevalent inequities, for the motive of service against the motive of gain—there is no mistaking the general direction in which Christ lies from here. And we belong with him. This, then, is my challenge to my own conscience and to yours: More prophetic religion, that, far from allowing the best conscience of our time to get ahead, will make it difficult for even pioneering goodness to keep up!

PRAYER

Eternal God, we have often sought comfort in Thee. Now we ask Thee to stir us up and lead us out, to challenge us with ideals ahead which we have not clearly seen and have not distantly reached. O God, go before this generation like a pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night. Amen.

Dr. Fosdick preached the foregoing sermon on January 5, 1936.

Prayer

By Harry Emerson Fosdick

Eternal Spirit, not far from any one of us, in Whom we live and move and have our being, we worship Thee. In the world from which we come we often forget Thee, and things visible, tangible, sensual so obsess our thought, fill our eyes, and preoccupy our hearing that we lose sight and audience of Thee. O God, make real to us in the sanctuary the things that *are* real. Here let small things seem small and great things great. Rearrange, we beseech Thee, the perspective of our life. Round our little days throw such horizons that the seen and temporal may take their lower place and the unseen and eternal capture our imagination and our faith.

We do not come to urge on Thee our small requests but rather to put our lives at Thy disposal that Thou mayest do in and through and for us what Thou dost wish. Thou art great and we are small; Thou art eternal and our lives are bounded by a sleep; we are Thy servants; Thou, from everlasting to everlasting, art the God of all. Take us in Thy keeping. Mold us to Thy will. Make us the instruments and implements of Thy purpose. Release Thy power, O God, through us into the world that because we have met here some great thing may be done on earth, not by us but through us by Thee.

Dost Thou not desire our peace? Therefore put us, we beseech Thee, in such relationship with Thee that peace may come. Let the anxieties and fearfulness of ordinary days grow dim. Let the great affirmations of Christian conviction and faith be real in our hearts. Blow trumpets in our souls this day. Grant such margin of spiritual reserve around our need, such deep wells to draw our comfort and fortitude from, that the peace of God which passeth all understanding may be ours.

Dost Thou not desire for us health of heart and mind and body? Therefore take from us those false anxieties, those needless tensions, which spoil our days, distract our lives, and make even our bodies ill. O God, the great and eternal God, Who, when the doors are open, wilt come in to a man and sup with him in his inner dwelling, Thou with him and he with Thee, so enter into our lives today.

Dost Thou not desire for us righteousness? Therefore grant us honesty with ourselves that we may not evade our sins but, sincerely facing them, be deeply penitent. Especially help us to remember before Thee those things whereby our illdoing has hurt not only our own souls but the lives of others. Because we cannot keep within the narrow boundaries of our experience the consequences of our wrongdoing, because our sins always flow over to destroy other lives, make us penitent, that with hospitable hearts we may welcome Thee like the sun to drive out our darkness with Thy light.

Dost Thou not desire our joy? Our goodness can commend itself to men only when it sings, when it is radiant, resilient, and joyful. Thou Who hast taught us that the fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, we would be to Thee like channels through which Thy springs of joy can flow today. So help us to handle our benedictions, remembering them with gratitude, and our troubles, surmounting them with victory, that our lives, being strong, may be glad.

And as thus for ourselves we pray, we think of all Thou dost desire to do for the world at large. Across the boundaries of race and nation, over the prejudices that sever folk from folk, Thy purposes run, planetary, all-inclusive, for the brotherhood of man. This is Thy purpose. As we pray for it may we open up our lives to it that through us it may come to pass.

We ask it in the spirit of Christ. Amen.

INVITATION

In our lovely new Church Garden,
On the night of June the third,
We're to have a springtime party.
Great occasion! Have you heard?

Prompt at six the garden's open.
See the grounds; then find a seat.
Supper will be served on tables.
Dainty springtime food to eat.

Eighty-five cents for the supper;
All the other things are free —
Springtime air, green grass and flowers,
And the Fosdick Family!

At eight-thirty we will gather
Down in the Assembly Hall;
And the usual monthly service
Will inspire and help us all.

Write and make your reservation,
Do not wait until too late;
For in this old-fashioned party
We want YOU. So-SAVE THE DATE.

THE ANNUAL GARDEN PARTY OR "STRAWBERRY FESTIVAL" OF RIVERSIDE CHURCH WAS HELD THIS YEAR ON JUNE THIRD. ABOUT THIRTY MINUTES AFTER THE PICTURES SHOWN HERE WERE TAKEN A TYPICAL YOUNG HUDSON RIVER HURRICANE ROARED DOWN THE VALLEY AND COMPLETELY WRECKED THE OUTDOOR DINING-ROOM.

The Head Table—DR. AND MRS. FOSDICK, MR. AND MRS. TREVOR ARNETT, AND MR. AND MRS. ALBERT SCOTT HAD A FRIENDLY GROUP AT THIS TABLE, BUT BY DESSERT TIME ALL HAD SOUGHT SHELTER IN THE CHURCH AND LEFT THE STRAWBERRIES BEHIND.

Weekday Church Schools

By W. Dyer Blair

Educational Director, Greater New York Federation of Churches

Weekday Church Schools were conducted during this past year in 149 Protestant Churches. Each school meets once a week from 3:30 to 5.00 o'clock after the public school closes for the day. In many churches they supplement the work of the Sunday Schools and in others they reach hundreds of children who are not connected with any church and the only religious education these children receive is in the weekday church school.

The purpose of the schools is to make religion an integral part of the everyday life of the child. A great mass of impressions is operating on the minds of children in the public schools, on the streets, in the movies and in the homes. There is seldom anyone who sees the need of straightening out these conflicting impressions and preventing moral confusion. This is one of the problems the weekday church schools have attempted to solve in a number of centers.

As an illustration, one of the schools meets every Friday afternoon in a community once largely an old residential section. Now the community is changed and the children come from families of South American, Chinese, Moroccan, West Indian Negro and Puerto Rican backgrounds. One of the teachers in the Junior Department had eighteen children of whom the majority were Puerto Rican. These children did not feel at home in the community and they were often discriminated against by the children in the school and on the playground. There was a wide gap between the things which they were learning every day in the community and in their homes.

The teacher set out to develop a program in the weekday church school which would help to unify the experiences which the children were having, which would enable them to discover deeper religious meanings in life, and to overcome a great deal of the moral confusion in their minds. She realized that her work could not be effective if it were cut off from the other great areas of experience which the children were having in the homes, on the streets and in the public school. She visited the children's homes, made friends of their parents, visited the public schools and found that these children were greatly interested in the Geography course. With this interest as a basis she developed in the weekday church school a series of projects on race relationships.

They had been studying in their public school geography about South America, the West Indies, Africa and China. The children now through their drama, music, worship and use of the Bible learned to have a friendly interest in other people. Here they were prepared as children to meet some of the blows of society as members of a minority racial and cultural group. There grew up a sense of the universality of many experiences, including many unpleasant ones of racial isolation. Here they had first hand friendly

fellowship with other racial groups in which the local group took the initiative in sharing happiness. There was a sense of the worth of all nations in the sight of God and an emotional loyalty to people in all lands who are struggling to improve life. This school is only one of many that are endeavoring to help children discover and make their own the quality of living reflected in the life, teachings and personality of Jesus Christ.

In another weekday church school there are twenty 12 to 15-year-old boys and girls. The teacher, while visiting the public school, discovered that his group had a great interest in nature study. Using this interest as a basis, he has worked out with them in their weekday church school several projects which, through the music, worship, drama, discussions and Bible study, have helped the youngsters to interpret their public school experience in terms of Christian values. On several occasions they have gone on outings to the woods with their leader where their nature study was interpreted through a service of worship. This experience has led them into discussions about the problems of pain and suffering in nature, floods which destroy life, disease and death, and what we can do to work with God in improving life and mastering the forces of nature.

The weekday church schools were started by the Protestant Teachers Association some fifteen years ago and this association in turn interested the two Federations of Churches. Within the last two years these three agencies have formed the Central Committee for Religious Education which acts as a coördinating organization for the entire city. One of the major emphases has has been on peace education. Many centers have developed outstanding peace programs designed to teach not only the children but the parents of the children to understand, appreciate, work, and play with people of other racial groups. These programs have helped scores of parents of older children to discuss with them many of the critical problems in connection with establishing world peace. One group of parents of adolescents was helped to strip war of its glory, and without unduly arousing emotions, enabled their children to face some of the stark realities of the war system. Every effort is being made to multiply parents' groups of this type.

Many of the children come from families on relief. We have no way of knowing how many children are living in the emotionally disturbed circumstances of a relief home. It is highly necessary to increase the number of schools reaching these children and to increase good centers where negro children can attend. These people are subjected to every form of suffering and privation. Their suffering is intensified by constant discrimination. Children from homes of this type often come to a weekday church school led by a teacher who is a counselor and friend, who helps them feel that they can do worthwhile things, and that they really amount to something. Groups plan, carry through, and judge all kinds of interesting activities in the light of Christian values. The weekday church schools seek to create the kind of environment where Christ-like personality may blossom.

THE BOARD OF USHERS AT THEIR THIRTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL DINNER

READING FROM THE RIGHT OF THE PICTURE THE DISTINGUISHABLE MEN AT THE "HEAD TABLE" ARE HUGH HAWTHORNE, CHESTER STEVENS, C. I. HELLSTROM, JAMES PRATT, GEORGE CARR, AMBROSE CLARK (DINNER CHAIRMAN), ARTHUR PLANTEROTH (CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD), DR. FOSDICK, ALBERT SCOTT, EUGENE FROMENT, E. C. CARDER, BENJAMIN DAY, W. S. RICHARDSON, H. J. SIMS, MALTBY HARRIS, GEORGE HEIDT.

Thirty-Eighth Annual Dinner of the Board of Ushers

NEW YORK ATHLETIC CLUB—MAY 11, 1936

THE program opened with remarks by the Dinner Chairman, Mr. Ambrose Clark: "Gentlemen, fellow members and guests: Thirty-eight years ago last September this organization was founded in the Fifth Avenue Baptist Church. We started with six men, three of whom were older men, and they dropped out, leaving the field to the younger group. Those of us who were fortunate enough to have started in those days this voluntary Christian activity could hardly have visualized this magnificent gathering here tonight. From the early six we have grown until our active membership tonight is eighty-one, of which seventy-five active members are present. This showing testifies to the spirit of loyalty in volunteer Christian work and to comradeship among ourselves and associates. I am, of course, very proud indeed to welcome on behalf of the Dinner Committee such a large number of former members here tonight. I also wish to express my appreciation and thanks to every member of the Dinner Committee. We cannot think of those days and our struggles organizing the work without associating with that early history the ushers' everlasting friend and our old comrade of Fifth Avenue days—Mr. Willard S. Richardson."

Following a brief talk by Mr. Richardson, Mr. Clark introduced in succession, calling on each for brief responses, Eugene McK. Froment, the first chairman of the Board; Harry D. Sims of Cleveland, Ohio, who had made the trip to New York to attend the dinner; John Preston Phillips, active during the Park Avenue days and now by his own confession an official in a suburban Episcopal church and a member of the Board of Ushers there, where "he helps to keep Christian people satisfied with their seats in the House of God"; William T. Gossett, former member of the Board, who is now serving as Secretary to the Board of Trustees of the Church.

Then followed introductions of "father and son" groups who were present, in each instance the sons having joined the Board while their fathers were still active. Eugene McK. Froment and his two sons, Frank L. and Howard; Norman W. Andrews and his son, Jack; George Kemp and son, Howard; Dr. Vincent Munier and son, Robert. Also included in this group was one guest, Ex-Sheriff David H. Knott who, with his son Robert, was importuned to join the active ranks of the Board.

Further introductions were engineered in such a fine spirit of comradery and good-will that they contributed in no small degree to the interest and enthusiasm with which the whole program was carried on.

Hon. Rufus E. McGahen, Budget Director of the City of New York, was introduced and recalled that the first financial responsibility of any magnitude that came to him was as treasurer, years ago, of the Board of Ushers.

Otto Wolfe, now of Belmont, Massachusetts, had made the trip for the sake of renewing old acquaintances. Otto, when he joined the Board back in the

Fifth Avenue days, was the baby of the group, the youngest man ever elected to active membership.

William R. Conklin, now a member of the Board of Trustees, was importuned to see that his sons "join up."

George T. Fesler was another out-of-towner, this one from Salamanca, New York, who had come back for the occasion.

Citations for Distinguished Achievement

This item in the program provided a boisterous and mirth-provoking interlude. It was engineered by Hugh Hawthorne and Albert Gubelman, the former furnishing the dignity and mock seriousness befitting the occasion, and the latter reading the respective citations which he had written out of his intimate knowledge of the hobbies, foibles, and personal experiences of the men and in his fast-flowing and inimitable diction George Kemp assisted in the ceremony after the manner of a college dean.

Arthur Planteroth, Chairman of the Board, after much by-play and persiflage, received a Toy Typewriter. Bert Uthe, perfect attendance for six years, Alarm Clock. Brooke Johnston, most engaged member of the Board, set of Quintuplets. Alexander Hamilton, who commutes forty miles each day, Toy Airplane. Chester Stevens, busiest of all, a Toy Telephone. Hugo Hustad and Jansen Hoornbeek, declared in a tie for place as "best looking usher," Mirror. Robert Munro, member of the "Free and Easy Club," Toy Ship. Oscar Irvin, most all-around usher, Roller Skates. Ambrose Clark, oldest in years and youngest in ideas, Toy Doll.

So passed a happy evening that was not without its evidences of serious purpose and lasting loyalty that spoke volumes for the place that the Church has in the lives and hearts of this great group of men even as it abundantly demonstrated the very large place which the Board of Ushers has in the life of this Church and will have in the years to come.

Benjamin Day brought the felicitations of the Board of Deacons and Albert Scott spoke briefly for the Board of Trustees. George Sage was presented with a watch in recognition of twenty-five years of service.

Dr. Fosdick brought the evening to a close with characteristically stimulating remarks, sending the men away with these understanding words—

"Dignity, Service, and Fraternity—these three are obvious in the Board of Ushers. Former members have come back from the ends of the earth after thirty years to join you at your dinner. If we continue, it will be so after thirty more years have passed. You have the profound thanks of the Church for what you have done."

During the evening the election of officers was held. The following were elected for the ensuing year:

Chairman	J. Arthur Planteroth
1st Vice-Chairman .	Maltby G. L. Harris
Asst. Vice-Chairmen .	H. C. Houston, Jr.
	John Kauderer
	Alvah Taylor

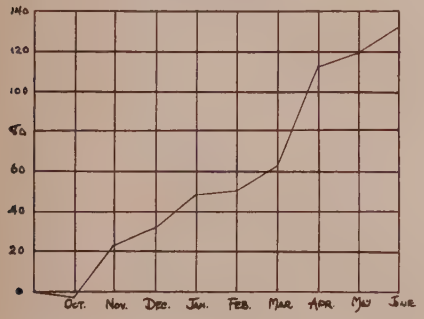
Mr. Planteroth, the Chairman, paid special tribute to Maltby Harris, a long-time member of the Board for whom the Church as well as the Board has the highest respect and who, as Vice-Chairman, has had a particularly heavy responsibility.

The following men were cited for perfect attendance during the past year: Elbridge Gatewood, Dr. Jansen Keeler Hoornbeek, Oscar W. Irvin, Elmer M. Olson, Albert C. Uthe, Dr. Paul B. Van Dyke.

Membership

A Summary Prepared by Helen Yergin

If you still have at hand THE CHURCH MONTHLY of July, 1935—we are sure you have—look on page 176 at the graphs showing the net gain in membership for the four years from 1931 to 1935. Then note the line given below for this past year, 1935-36. You will see that it runs almost parallel to the one of 1934-35 but closes the year on a slightly higher level.



This shows a net gain for these nine months—October, 1935, through June, 1936—of 133, though the total number of new members was 225. The gains and losses for the year may be summarized as follows:

ACCESSIONS:		
Confession of Faith	47	
Experience	52	
Letter	125	
Restored	1	
		225
LOSSES:		
Transfer by Letter	30	
Membership discontinued	33	
Death	33	
		96

This brings the present total membership to 2600. In addition to these are the affiliated members who now number 147. This figure, which is smaller than usual, is due to the fact that we have just been canvassing this group to find out which ones were completing their school work or furloughs in New York this year and would not be returning in the Fall. With the opening of Schools, Colleges, and Seminaries in September and October we expect our average number again.

This past year we have lost an unusual number of our members by death. Since we last reported names in these columns, the following friends have left us:

John William Schroeder
Mrs. Theodosia Lawson
Mrs. Joseph L. Porter
Mr. and Mrs. R. H. Knowles
Henry C. Pelton
Mrs. Henrietta T. Harris
Edgar L. Marston
Miss Dorothy Scarborough
Miss Jane Day
Harry W. Dyer
Mrs. Charles H. Bogert
Mrs. Thomas E. Hazell
Miss Edwina L. Evans
Miss Eleanor D. Johnson
Mrs. Annie Ker
Mrs. Bessie M. Fuller
S. L. Herriott
Mrs. Frank W. Morse
F. A. Winchell
Hunter S. Stewart
Miss Ruth B. Fisher
H. O. Caster
H. H. Lansford
H. Gardner Dobson
Mrs. Marie F. Smalley

Dr. Herbert R. Armstrong
Miss Abigail Pennell
Mrs. Walter Laidlaw
Mrs. Ethel Webster
Charles A. Gillham
Mrs. John B. Calvert
Mrs. Harry P. Fish
VINCENT G. SANBORN

In connection with our well established "open membership" policy it is interesting to note that it was as far back as April, 1924, that we first received persons into membership by transfer from other than Baptist Churches. The first person thus received was Mrs. H. E. Needham, from the Plymouth Congregational Church, of Denver, Colorado. She is still a member and is one of 1730 in our membership who are not Baptists. Denominationally this group is divided as follows:

Armenian	1
Baptist	870
Confession of Faith Without Baptism	316
Congregational	204
Community	29
Christian Science	1
Christian and Disciples	31
Evangelical	8
Federated	2
Filipino	2
Friends	2
Greek Catholic	1
Greek Orthodox	2
Independent	1
Jewish	3
Lutheran	27
Methodist Episcopal	236
Methodist Protestant	5
Mennonite	4
Methodist Episcopal, South	9
Presbyterian U. S. A.	427
Protestant Episcopal	120
Reformed	41
Roman Catholic	16
Unitarian	10
Union	5
United Church of Canada	12
United Brethren	3
United Presbyterian	3
Universalist	4
United	1

Experience (denomination not given) the balance

Truly we are an interdenominational and non-denominational church.

Last year we listed the persons who had been members of the church for over fifty years—10 of them. We have lost one of them by death since that time, but the one year has added another name, that of Mrs. W. C. Cramp. If space permitted we would be able to list just about an even 125 who have been members for 25 years or more, other than the 10 above mentioned.

EDITOR'S NOTE.—We regret to announce that with this issue of THE CHURCH MONTHLY Miss Yergin terminates her connection as secretary to the Editor. For five years she has been a member of our staff and has had large responsibility for the details connected with publishing THE CHURCH MONTHLY during that time. Miss Yergin leaves us to be associated with her sister for the summer in the direction of a camp for girls, known as Camp Sesame, at Oak Ridge, New Jersey. She will then take up her new work in the Alumnæ Office at Mt. Holyoke College, South Hadley, Massachusetts.

Miss Yergin's place has been taken by Mrs. Sarah Koch, who has been assisting in the Church School office for the past four years.

By the Way

Oxford Historian Finds Greatest Enemy of Peace is the Provincial Mind

An international judicial conscience is taking form in the world, said Dr. Robert McElroy, Harmsworth Professor of History at Oxford University, England, in an address before the sessions of the Institute of Human Relations which was held under the auspices of the National Conference of Jews and Christians at Blue Ridge, North Carolina, on June twenty-second.

Dr. McElroy's address was mainly devoted to the thesis that in the interest of world peace the present dominant nationalistic myth must give way to the development of an international mind.

"The great enemy of peace is the provincial mind," he said. "Creating an enlightened consensus of opinion throughout the world is the first task of lovers of peace everywhere."

Despite the dark outlook of the present international situation he expressed confidence in the development of the institution of the International World Court as an instrument of the judicial conscience of the world.

Dr. M. Ashby Jones of Atlanta, Georgia, also attended the sessions. He addressed the group at one meeting, speaking on the subject of Group Consciousness and deploring the tendency to divide American life into sectarian groups. "When the individual can be defined by his group he is limited by it," he stated.

Impatience, Laziness and Conceit Laid to Men

Impatience, laziness, skepticism, and conceit were listed as the chief shortcomings of men in their marital relationships today by Reverend Ivan H. Hagedorn, Pastor of the Bethel Evangelical Lutheran Church in his tenth annual Bride and Groom Service on June twenty-second.

Mr. Hagedorn's observations on men are: "They are so impatient. There is some element of truth in the old maid's criticism, 'Man may be divided into two classes—those whose meals disagree with them and those who disagree with their meals.'

"They are so lazy. It has always been my belief that Mary Todd, who could sputter like a string of firecrackers, made the real contribution to Lincoln's life. Married to Ann Rutledge, Lincoln would have gone to seed in the sweet comforts of domestic life.

"They are too skeptical. The fact that men are less attracted to religion than women may account for the fact that there are by far more men in our penitentiaries than women.

"They never seem to adjust themselves to the new status of women. Man often enters into marriage relationships with ideas a century old. A new day has dawned for womanhood, and the sensible man will admit it."

We hesitate to quote further concerning the men and refuse to quote anything about the women.

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The SUMMER SCHOOL STUDENT *and* THE RIVERSIDE CHURCH

We have the same attitude toward the summer school student that we have toward any neighbor of the church or resident of the community at any time of the year. The Riverside Church belongs to the city and its people and of course, more specifically and intimately, to the people who live nearby or who choose to give us a place in their consideration regardless of where they happen to live. As a church we are attempting to give people a welcome the first time they come here, not because we want to be known as a "cordial church," or a "friendly church," or any other hackneyed kind of church, but because if we are not friendly the first time we will not have a chance to be friendly at all with the thousands of visitors who make only one call at our door or at any door in New York.

We want definitely to assure all who come this way that this church belongs to them. The fact that they may be staying only a few weeks simply makes it more imperative that our doors swing easily and that formalities be dispensed with. It is in this spirit that we welcome the Summer School students. We look forward to their coming each year as a thrilling and challenging opportunity. Their life pours new life into our program. We want to be useful to them and to be used by them.

▽

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by

HARRY EMERSON FOSDICK

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